3:Bernal Villa E-5 (1952) 1953 SC15 Paez SC15

Aspects of Paez Culture. Mythology and Tales from the Parcialidad of Calderas, Tierradentro
[Aspectos de la Cultura Paez. Mitología y Cuentos de la Parcialidad de Calderas, Tierradentro]

Segundo Bernal Villa

Bogotá: 1953
Revista Colombiana de Antropologia
Vol. I, pp. 279-309

Translated from the Spanish by A. Brunel

Human Relations Area Files

1965

[Title page]

3:Bernal Villa--1 E-5 (1952) 1953 SC15 Paez SC15

/279/

900

Aspects of Paez Culture
Mythology and Tales from the Parcialidad of Calderas, Tierradentro
by Segundo Bernal Villa

/Page 280 is blank./

/281/ Chapter I

131 Geographic location.--In the northeastern part of the de-
133 partment of Cauca, like a spearhead embedded in the department of Huila, is found the region of Tierradentro, formed by the numerous eastern spurs of the Central Cordillera. It has the shape of a triangle formed by the water divides of the hydrographic basins of the rivers Páez and Yaguará to the east and La Plata and Páez to the south. Toward the west, the Central Cordillera rises like a backbone, along which the paramos of Guanacas (3,518 meters), Las Delicias (3,750 meters), and Moras (3,670 meters) stand out. Toward the north, like a gigantic colossus and dominating the vertex of this geometric figure, stands Nevado del Huila (5,750 meters), the highest in Colombia, except for the Sierra Nevada de Santa Marta.

133 Topography.--Actually, Tierradentro is a complex of mountains running in every direction, although along general lines they are oriented from west to east on the right bank of the Páez and from north to south on its left bank, rugged, steep, with lofty peaks and great gorges, canyons and hills, ravines and valleys, terraces and escarpments, ridges and plateaus, numerous gullies, rivers, and streams with violent
[484] currents and thundering noise. To travel through this region "is to go up or down," as was said by Fr. Pedro de Aguado (1).

1. Cited by Hernández de Alba (Gregorio), p. 925. /See the bibliography in the foreign text, p. 309./

/281 cont./

487 Routes of communication.--Until the fourth decade of the present century, the routes of penetration were horse paths which passed through the paramos of Guanacas, Las Delicias, and Moras, or through Inzá, Pedregal, Topa, and La Plata. The three first ones communicated with the Cauca valley, and the second with the /282/ Magdalena valley. These were the routes of the colonial era and, to a large extent, of the times [648] of the republic. The Guanacas route was the first to serve for communication between the kingdom of Quito and Santafé de Bogotá, owing, of course, to the more favorable attitude of the Guanaca Indians toward the conquistadores, who, taking advantage of their relationship with the Paez, made them their 797 allies and assistants. The first religious mission was established 175 in Guanacas in 1613. By way of the Paramo de Moras Captain 175 Juan de Ampudia entered Paez territory to take exemplary re- 648 venge for the tragic death of his colleague-at-arms, Captain Pedro de Añasco. To his disgrace and that of Spain, he met a terrible death on the cliffs of Togoima. By way of the same Paramo de Moras came the Adelantado Don Sebastián de Belalcázar, who had the same aims as his unfortunate predecessor, but this time his death, too, was added. The Paez gave him the most crushing defeat on the Peñón de Tálaga, and the Adelantado had to flee, leaving on the field of battle 491 the body of the heroic Captain García Tovar. The intense [484] traffic through these dangerous peaks and cold paramos decreased considerably with the opening of the Quindío road, and even much more with the inauguration of the La Plata-Belalcázar road. Tierradentro is connected by road with Popayán and 487 Neiva. Nowadays only the Indians from Mosoco, San José, and Vitoncó, and the Paez from Toribío, Tacueyó, and [788] Jambaló travel by way of the Paramo de Moras. That of Las Delicias is traveled by the Moguex, especially on their annual pilgrimages to the religious festivities of Our Lady of Nátaga. The Guanacas route is practically abandoned. There is also another route, traveled relatively frequently, which follows the

/282 cont./

487 Páez waters upstream, continues along the river Negro, climbs over the cordillera, and reaches Tacueyó.

133 Hydrography.--From north to south in a deep and steep bed runs the great Páez, whose frothy waves rush rapidly through the vertigo of the torrents, run swiftly while tracing spirals in the frenzied force of the whirlpools, or leap, being broken into a thousand fragments by the violent shock in the numerous falls and rapids. Born of the thaws on Huila, it receives along its eighty-kilometer course the turbulent /283/ rivers Muesga (San Vicente), Moras, Kukiyú, Ullucos, and La Plata on its right bank, and the Símbola and Negro de Narváez on its left. The Páez river drains all of Tierradentro.

137 Vegetation.--In the major part of the region there no longer exist the "dense and impenetrable forests" mentioned by Carlos Cuervo Márquez. The timber and medicinal species have practically disappeared. The Cinchona genus was heavily exploited during the second half of the past century, when the quinine industry flourished and constituted one of the most vigorous lines in the national economy. The large and dense forests have been cut down systematically by the Indians and colonists to such an extent that the latter are found as far as the steep crags of the Central Cordillera and the hydrographic [34] valleys of the Símbola and Negro de Narváez rivers. On the ridges where virgin forest has miraculously remained intact, it has been noted that it has been entirely cut down within a week in order to make a pasture for the llamas; it is not used, not even for firewood, much less for charcoal, the techniques for which seem to be unknown. In the plains and small valleys of the streams and rivers there is a thriving vegetation which for the most part is of cultural origin, since it was planted to shade the numerous coffee plantations. Gramineae abound. On the hills and plateaus, thickets and shrubs are common, while on the steep slopes pastures present their opulent greenness in winter /the rainy season/ and their yellow-brown tones in summer /the dry season/. The fields are prepared with

The fields are prepared with
/283 cont./
241 machetes and fire. They are the so-called rozas, a barbarous, primitive, and criminal method of agriculture. Burning is a habit of natives and colonists alike and goes so far that even the vegetation of the cliffs, crags, and escarpments is burned, where obviously no practical use can be derived and in addition it leaves the denuded rock at the mercy of the agents of erosion.

136 Fauna.--The fauna consists of a few classes of ophidians and small mammals: tinajos, coatis, pacas, armadillos, porcupines, foxes, deer, tapirs, sloths, and rabbits. Bears, ocelots, and pumas are found in the virgin montañas. Birds, such as wild pigeons and chachalacas, abound.

132 Climate.--There are no data on the rainfall, temperatures, /284/ and winds of this zone. The climate on the whole is temperate, or, to put it better, it is a coffee-growing climate.

361 Owing to the unevenness of the terrain, the natives inhabit
133 a region that extends from 1,000 meters (Itaibe) up to 2,500
132 meters above sea level (Suin, Mosoco, Vitoncó, and Lame). According to Dr. Gregorio Hernández de Alba, at the time of the Conquest the Paez peoples of Tierradentro inhabited "altitudes and climates between 2,620 meters with 13 degrees centigrade and 1,650 meters with 17 degrees centigrade on the average" (1).

1. Hernández de Alba (Gregorio), p. 917 /see the bibliography in the foreign text, p. 309/.

132 The atmospheric humidity and the rainfall increase as the cordillera becomes higher and snow-capped Huila draws nearer, with two summers and two winters, influenced, of course, by the topography, the vegetation, and proximity to the summit. There is an intense summer during the months of January and February, and another in July, August, and September. The winters are intense during the months of March-June and, on a smaller scale, in October-December. Snow-capped Huila

/284 cont./

132 gives rise to cold local winds that blow through the valley of the Páez, affecting chiefly the areas of Vitoncó, Suin, Chinas, San José, Mosoco, and also the parcialidad /a territorial division/ of Calderas itself. The variation in temperature is noticeable in these zones sometimes having hot days and very cold nights. Nebulosity is almost constant, especially in the northern zones.

241 Economy.--The topographic and climatic characteristics permit the cultivation of various plants, such as maize, beans, bananas, sugar cane, yuca, arracacha, and gourds in the temperate zones, and in the cold ones potatoes, maize, ullucos, [433] beans, gourds, and cabbage. The produce barely leaves a [439] surplus for trade with the parcialidades and urban centers of [438] Belalcázar, Inzá, and Valencia. The potato crops of Mosoco, Vitoncó, and San José serve for an active trade with the Paez of the western slope of the cordillera, across the Páramo de Moras.

433 Coffee and the production of panela are important lines
245 in the economy of the colonists and also of numerous groups
249 of acculturated natives. The coffee of Tierradentro is con-
177 sidered one of the best in the country, owing to the quality and mildness of the bean.

23) /285/ The raising of livestock flourishes among the civilized
437 groups. For the natives it serves for maintaining a barter trade with their neighbors, the white and mestizo colonists.

311 On the whole, native production is relatively scant,
433 giving rise to times of "hambruna" /ravenous hunger/ when
[731] the summers or winters are rather harsh. The workable land lies in the small plains and valleys of rivers and streams, on the alluvial terraces, and on the plateaus. Comparing the size of Tierradentro with that of its arable land, the latter appears scant, a problem that is aggravated by the increase in population and the habitual burning.

101 Population.--Tierradentro is the country of the Paez,
361 who at the time of the Conquest were settled to the north of

/285 cont./

101 the Ullucos river, since to the south of it were found the Topas,
361 Yaguiváes, and Guanaca. It seems that in the fifteenth century,
[166 193] under the rule of the cacique Calambás, the Paez went over the cordillera and settled in Pitayó, Toribío, and Tacueyó.

162 Dr. José Pérez de Barradas gave a number of 30,000 souls.
[161] The census of 1938 gives a total of 17,578 inhabitants distributed as follows: municipio of Páez (Belalcázar), 13,861; municipio of Inzá, 3,717. The censuses of 1951 give a total of 25,495 inhabitants, with 15,388 in the municipio of Páez and 10,103 in that of Inzá. It is obvious that the census of 1938 was defective, especially with regard to the population of this last municipio.

[177] Of this population, approximately 80 per cent is Indian, acculturated for the most part, except for those of Calderas, Suin, and Chinas, where traditions are strong and their contacts with the white scant, and in addition there is great resistance to living with him.

142 The Paez are of medium height, with light brown skin, dark brown eyes, straight black hair, broad foreheads, rather pronounced cheekbones, pentagonal rather than oval faces,
361 robust constitutions, and rather broad shoulders. Their pueblos
796 consist of a church, a school, the house of the priest and of
342 the cabildo, and a few other houses which are occupied only at the times of religious fiestas; they live in ranchos that are rectangular in plan, with thatched roofs and walls made of tight rows of maize stalks. /286/ located on privately owned land and a considerable distance apart.

29/ Dress.--The Paez dress simply. The man wears linen trousers, a poncho tied to the waist with a leather strap and another that falls freely from the shoulders, and a hat which they manufacture themselves with palm or bamboo leaves. The woman wears a wide skirt tied around the waist with a multicolored band preceding the folds made at the back, a poncho similar to the one worn by the men and also tied around

/286 cont./

291 the waist, and over it a rebozo or shawl of foreign make; they wear hats of masculine manufacture. They carry a thin stick
283 one meter long more or less, called kasguat, held under the left armpit, and at its upper end there is a bundle of wool to be spun, a task which they do at any time, while walking or sitting in the house, regardless of whether a child is resting on their backs or, when they are walking along the road, a heavy
301 load. Only the women wear ornaments consisting of multi-colored necklaces, earrings, and sometimes rings.

293 Both men and women usually carry three woolen pouches,
415 aside from others of fique, a very small one for money, a larger one for mambe /coca and lime for chewing/, and the third, which is the largest of all and holds the other two, is used to carry palm leaves or the plaited work made with them for the men, and other things for the women.

276 Coca.--All the Paez are "mambe chewers," men, women,
[461] and children, regarding coca as an article that gives strength,
[261] frees one from laziness, and mitigates hunger. Without it, of
[273] course, they will not work. Coca and chicha, fermented sugar-
[262] cane juice, play the role of real foods, given their starchy and scant diet.

631 Parcialidades and cabildos.--Politically, the Indians are
621 organized into parcialidades, each headed by a cabildo made up of a gobernador and substitute, a major alcalde and another minor one, two alguaciles, three fiscales, a comisario, a capitán, and a síndico elected each year and put in office by the respective alcaldías of the municipio, except for the last two, who are named for life and put in office by the /287/ Church. Their functions are administrative and police work, but in reality they exercise functions of social, legal, and religious control.

631 The parcialidades are bounded by the craggy peaks and the deep, rugged beds of the streams and rivers in such a way that each one circumscribes specific kinds of geography, and even of

/287 cont./

631 climate and vegetation. Although Paez culture is certainly unitary, each parcialidad presents different nuances which are evident even in the mythology and language. The antropomimia is quite different in each parcialidad.

Nowadays there are 16 parcialidades, four of which belong to the municipio of Inzá and the remaining 12 to that of Páez (Belalcázar).

771 Magic and medicine.--There are three institutions which
772 go in unison and encroach upon others, which explain the causation of sicknesses, the treatment for them, and serve as escape valves for aggression. They are:

a) The one made up of the trilogy of supernatural beings named Duende /ghost/, Echi, and Arco /rainbow/;

b) The institution of the medicine man, and

c) Sorcery.

753 a) Duende, Arco, and Echi are the causers of illnesses,
776 each of them producing a specific symptomatology which serves
[758] as the basis for the diagnostics of common people, a diagnostics
[787] corroborated by the divining activities of the medicine man. These supernatural beings cause illnesses by puncture, aroused by the annoyance that they suffer because of the sorcerers' practices, or by those who had contact with corpses and did not go through the mandatory purification, or because people have passed through places that are taboo, such as bogs and lagoons, or have failed to comply with the rites and ceremonies when slaughtering cattle or when harvesting new clearings, or because they have not observed "custom" at the first menstruation or childbirth.

756 b) In the institution of the medicine man the functions of
787 divination, magic, and medicine are entwined. More precisely, the medicine man is a diviner-shaman-curer who has undergone an /288/ apprenticeship in the profession with an esteemed and experienced master or with the help of a guardian spirit seen in actuality or in dreams; the latter are the best

medicine men.

/288 cont./
medicine men. To cure the patient, he divines which of the supernatural beings caused the illness, proceeds to placate him, and then prescribes medicines to the patient. If the placation is not successful, the patient literally sinks into despair. The indispensable articles for all curing are coca, tobacco, and aguardiente. The medicine men are persons well along in years and belonging to the masculine sex. They cannot cure the effects of sorcery, although they can protect themselves against it.

c) Fifty per cent of all illnesses, the informants state, are caused by sorcery, and by the same token 50 per cent of the deaths, since sorcery is incurable. The sorcerers conceal their activities, and it seems that all adults are potential sorcerers. The institution of sorcery is a true escape valve for the strong aggressive impulses of the natives and to some extent plays the role of a social regulator. Through it are channeled the jealousy, resentment, and vengefulness of the natives. The victims of sorcery are the most skillful and hard-working individuals, those who have a good house, good crops, and a growing number of domestic animals. Harvests and plantings generally are the object of sorcery. Sorcerers who are publicly unmasked are exposed to the anger of the community and even to exile, a measure taken not so much on account of their being sorcerers as of their being thieves. All sorcerers are thieves. Sorcery appears with considerable frequency in the symbolism of dreams.

Marriage.--Marriage is monogamous and patrilocal. Both the chroniclers and Dr. Gregorio Hernández de Alba speak of the custom of the year of probation to acquaint the man with the skill, energy, and fecundity of his future wife. A thriving institution in times past, it is now in sharp decline owing to the action of mission work. Obviously, the purpose of this institution is to find out whether the woman is hard-working, faithful, not a thief, and to understand her ways in order to establish a lasting union. Nowadays the Paez, before being married

/288 cont./
583 in the church, live together for a period of indeterminate duration, explaining that /289/ the man does not have enough money at hand to marry as soon as he asks the woman, and it is necessary to work in order to obtain it.

771 Religion.--The religion of the Paez is formally Catholicism,
177 but many of their traditions are hidden in it. The principal
[796] fiestas of the natives are religious ones, which acquire true strokes of splendor. The Catholic priest is called upon for the ceremonies of baptism, marriage, and cases of death.

Chapter II

631 Calderas.--Incrusted in the very heart of Tierradentro is the
131 Parcialidad of Calderas, bounded on the north by a high ridge
133 that separates it from Chinas and Avirama; on the east, La Muralla, the very model of a fault, separates it from Avirama, just as a ridge separates it from Togoima; to the south, deep gorges and high peaks separate it from San Andrés and Togoima; to the west, the Quebrada Guacharaca divides it from the Parcialidad of Lame.

133 It is crossed from west to east by the Quebrada Kukiyú,
631 actually a river in terms of the volume and violence of its waters, whose bed is deep, enclosed, and inaccessible. Its
[423] left bank is somewhat softened by a beautiful plateau of about 20 hectares, with fertile lands, abundant waters, and on which the pueblo rises; it belongs to the community, whereas the other lands are private property guaranteed by the fact that the owner either personally cleared the montaña or inherited it from his ancestors who cleared the forest. The right bank is steep, harsh,
[161] rugged. Numerous clearings are to be seen on these sloping
[311] lands, indicating the increase in population that compels them to cultivate lands of low fertility and great danger for the laborer.

[Parcialidad of Calderas]

/289 cont./

142 The Calderuno /native of Calderas/ is rather tall, with a light copper skin, straight black hair, a straight nose somewhat flattened and broad at the base, slightly prominent cheekbones, dark brown eyes reminiscent of the Mongolian eye, a broad forehead, long and robust extremities, a slightly pentagonal face; many have mustaches, and, on the whole, the
157 features are rather /290/ handsome. On the other hand, he is talkative, communicative, deeply traditionalistic, proud
[36] of himself, and has a deep love of the land. Isolated as they
[177] are from the other parcialidades by natural accidents and far removed from the urban centers of Inzá and Belalcázar, they are shy, sullen, and withdrawn with the white, stubbornly opposed to contact with him, and, as a result their institutions have suffered less from the impact of cultural mestization.
797 Not even the very church that has worked so persistently for the
177 catechization of these tribes, especially in this century through the Lazarist missionaries active since 1905, has been able to penetrate fully into the soul of these people.

114 I have carried out my research in this parcialidad since
773 the month of August of last year, with several interruptions.
[124] The myths and tales which I now present were gathered with patient labor after much waiting, for the natives, when questioned about these themes, nearly always reply with the word himeto ("I don't know"). There is no need to stress the importance of mythology as an institution in the so-called "primitive" cultures. Nor is it my intention to theorize on the subject. It is enough to say, in the words of Herskovits, that "mitología es como la carta constitucional de las creencias y presta sentido a la conducta ritual que se deriva de sus consagraciones /mythology is the constitutional charter of beliefs and gives meaning to the ritualistic behavior that is derived from its consecrations/" (1). The chroniclers tell

1. Herskovits, p. 409 /see the bibliography in the foreign text, p. 309/.

/290/

114 us nothing about the religion and mythology of the Paez. Nor
773 do systematic modern studies exist. Nor do those who have had the opportunity to be in contact with them and to describe their customs and ways of life tell us about their religion and mythology. Furthermore, there are those who state that the Paez have no mythology. José Pérez de Barradas collected the myth of Juan Tama. Gregorio Hernández de Alba refers to it, and the Lazarist missionary Fr. David González also collected it and has it in his unpublished work, Los Paeces /The Paez/, in quite elaborate and synthetical form, as does G. Burg. It is obvious that a large part of the myths and tales which I am presenting, not to say all of them, have suffered modifications in the avatar of time, as the institutions also changed. Since mythology is the rationalization of conflicts created by the culture itself, it is subject to the directives /291/ of that society and culture. Its roots are inevitably of a sociological and cultural nature.

773 Many of the myths collected have a marked similarity to
776 that of Juan Tama. The predominant central motifs refer to
538 sex and aggression. The personages in the myths are Thunder, Llíban, Juan Chiracol, Chaute, and Santo Tomás. Llíban is regarded as Thunder's son, but everyone maintains that he is Thunder himself; he was a cacique, and the natives state that many of their caciques took refuge in the turbulent waters of the river. The last two personages merge and in reality form a single being. It is to be noted that in some accounts the tricky personage presented is not Tomás, who is a saint, but Pedro Dimales, his brother.

186 There is no need to emphasize the role played by the Pijao
793 in these accounts. The recollection of this people inured to
628 war is still fresh in the memory of the Calderunos, the characteristics of the struggle sustained against them still manifest, the fear that the name Pijao awakened still alive. To the Calderun mentality they seem like monsters, like animals of uncommon size and power, who drew fire from their armpits.

[Parcialidad of Calderas]

/291 cont./

773 They are in fact legendary personages who go beyond the
186 boundaries of legend to enter the territory of myth, not only
628 by their symbolism, but in their dramatic force, their sociological framework, and their cultural function.

The mythology gravitates around the behavior of the natives, their attitudes toward the whites, the organization of the cabildo, illnesses, and death. Of Juan Chiracol, a 23-year-old informant says: "He warns when the mob is coming, he no longer warns, so." And of Thunder, it is said that he almost killed a padre because he went to the montaña to get wood to board up the school. "Thunder was defending the
538 wood," they say. The tales were always told around the fire,
773 with men, women, and children present, who sometimes laughed, at other times kept silent, but always corroborated, corrected, elaborated, or confirmed. The storytellers sometimes put on a serious face, accompanied their tale with mimicry, and once in a while they would burst into mocking laughter, as if to signify that what they were saying was worthless and they did not believe it. I was soon able to ascertain
115 their sociological and cultural value. The myths and tales
773 were collected with the help of an interpreter, a mestizo from San Andrés, about 35 /292/ years old, tall, muscular, quiet in manner, intelligent, calculating, with great charm and a knowledge of Paez and the Spanish language; he was familiar with the customs of the Calderunos, esteemed by them, and
773 skilled in his questioning. We present below the myths and
128 tales collected, leaving the other aspects of the culture for presentation in a complete monograph.

1. Thunder

*539 The old people related that at one time the area was full of Pijao. Thunder lived in Sukafi. In view of the growing number of Pijao, he decided to kill them. He stood on a tall stone that is to be found there, threw his lariat /boleadora/

[Parcialidad of Calderas]

*539

292 cont./

and killed the Pijao up to Kuetando. Then he said to the medicine men that they could clear all the montañas, since all the animals were already dead. Saying this, he went to the lagoon of Vichaguau. This is why the cabildos of old went on nocturnal pilgrimages to the lagoon to speak with him. The medicine men believed that if the staffs of command were cooled off (enfriar), very few people would die, since Thunder himself helped to sustain them with his remedies. The medicine men of today are not qualified to speak with Thunder: they cannot go because he kills them on the spot.

Informant: Mārtín Kuskue, 50 years old, speaks very little Spanish.

Interpreter: Marco Antonio Penkue.

2. Thunder

The old people said that the lagoons abducted people. Actually it was Thunder.

Once a man had a potato field in Puelbits. It was a hollow, and there was a montaña. He went to harvest it. Around two o'clock in the afternoon there came an old man with a hat of twigs and massive and ugly in appearance. The harvester looked around and saw that he was coming along a fallen tree. The old man asked: "Are you already harvesting?" The man replied that he was and that he had already gathered a few. The old man asked if he would lease him the land so that they could work 293 together. The owner replied that he did not know about leasing, because for this purpose there were large areas of land where one could work. The old man insisted that he greatly desired to live and work with him. He puzzled the people and they did not want to speak to him anymore because he was a very ugly old man and unknown to them. He sat down to converse with them, but they did not respond very much. He then drew to the place a black cloud which began to pour down a heavy rain on the potato field. The people took

[Parcialidad of Calderas]

/293 cont./

*539 shelter in the rancho that they had, but it was penetrated by the rain. The old man followed behind them and sat down on a log outside the rancho. They invited him to come in, but he refused. They were further puzzled to see that the old man did not feel the rain. They did not lose sight of him. The water was up to the legs and it did not matter to their visitor. The people took flight, but the old man abducted the women. When the great medicine men were consulted, they declared that the old man was Thunder. They chased him away, and a bog was left at the place where he had been.

Informant: Rosario Iko, 80 years old, does not know Spanish.
Interpreter: Marco Antonio Penkue.

Version I

Some young men had a large piece of cultivated land shaped like a funnel. They had potatoes, and the harvest was good. When all the potatoes had been gathered, they left the mamma /mamá/ with a granddaughter there. In the afternoon a terrible storm arose; the field began to be flooded. An old man with a very large hat of twigs arrived. The water was nearly knee-high. The old woman and the old man remained sitting there. The little girl climbed up, asking the old people to come also; she reached a high place and was safe. The old people did not move. The field was transformed into a lagoon.

Informant: Justo Muse, 33 years old, speaks Spanish.
Interpreter: Marco Antonio Penkue.

Version II

In a potato field an old woman and four other members of her family were harvesting. Suddenly there was a downpour, and one of them, a little girl, climbed to the crest, and when she reached the heights the potato field was transformed into a lagoon. The others remained inside it. The /294/ girl saw

[Parcialidad of Calderas]

/294 cont./

539 from above that an old man in a cloak and a large hat of twigs went in. It is believed that those who remained inside the lagoon continued to live, since it seems that Thunder (the old man who went in) abducted them.

Informant: Juan Petins, 60 years old, knows Spanish.
Interpreter: Marco Antonio Penkue.

3. The Visit of the Young Stranger

The first inhabitants of Calderas related that a young man came to live on a ridge of the Parcialidad. A young girl visited him often. Her mother chided her for this, but she told her that a snake drew out dead pigeons for her from the branches and that she was going to collect them. Soon the girl was pregnant. She had a strange son, on whose body it could be seen that worms of some sort came out. The mother asked that great care be taken not to remove the worms because they were the child's very life. On one occasion the mother went to the fields and remained there for some time. Meanwhile the child woke up. The grandmother came to the hammock, took him in her arms, saw the worms, and removed them all. The child died. Its own mother returned and complained that there was no reason to kill the child. Since she was near a lagoon, she threw herself into it, but she did not drown. She merely vanished. So did the stranger. The medicine men said that the woman was living with the stranger in the lagoon. The grandmother decided to have magic performed on her and arranged for a meeting of medicine men. They asked for a Quito sapallo and the rags of a menstruating woman. They put them together and tossed them into the middle of the lagoon. The stranger and the girl fled to the lagoon of Santa Rosa. The one in Calderas dried out. The bogs in the pastures of Calderas are the remains of this lagoon. It is certain that the pair left at four o'clock in the afternoon in the midst of a black cloud. This is how it is known where they are.

Informant: Juan Petins.
Interpreter: Marco Antonio Penkue.

3: Bernal Villa--17 E-5 (1952) 1953 SC15 Paez SC15

[Parcialidad of Calderas]

/295/

*539

4. Llíban, the Son of Thunder

Some medicine men once had a meeting, when there was gold among the Indians. The first medicine man wore a gold hat. He called on the medicine men to make a medication. He called a stream into existence and there picked up the son of Thunder. He had him nursed at the breast of girls 13 or 14 years old, who could only endure it for three or four months and then died. Finally, Llíban was able to eat special foods. He grew up and was given the name of Llíban. He became the best medicine man in Tierradentro. A Pijao tribe came to kill Thunder's son. They came by way of the Alto de Belén, the Muralla, the Quebrada Kukiyú, from every side. He was blockaded. Then the cacique decided to send for the necessary weapon: the lariat. Since he was at the mercy of the enemy, he sent a servant for it, telling him that it was inside a jar. Inside the jar he found a very large green snake. He was afraid. He returned to the cacique to tell him what he had seen. The latter went in person to get it and was not afraid. He took out the snake. The enemy was surrounding him on all sides. He threw the snake as a lariat, and all the Pijao as far as Togoima fell dead. He remained alive. And since he was the son of Thunder he went to his father. He did this to prove that he was indeed the son of Thunder.

According to another informant, the snake was lightning, and this is why sometimes there is loud thunder.

Informant: Celia Urriaga, 65 years old, does not speak Spanish.

Interpreter: Marco Antonio Penkue.

Version I

Llíban is said to have resulted from a gathering of some medicine men who were called together at the time by a cacica /female cacique/. The medicine men called into

[Parcialidad of Calderas]

/295 cont./

*539 being a great flood in whose turbulent waters came the son of Thunder. They picked him up and took him to the cacica. They first fed him with the blood of selected girls who had not yet reached puberty. They became scarce because they died very soon. Llíban began to eat. They could not tame him, and they gave him the name of Llíban. He could not get used to living in a house and moved to Eshufi Ik ("bone lagoon."). When he left, he /296/ decided to exterminate the Pijao. The old people tell that at one time he made a plot in Calderas, with potatoes, maize, peas, and cabbage. He waited for the Pijao to come and take it. Thus it came to pass. He figured that they were all in the plot, turned himself into a Kuetaguata (stone of the seat /piedra de la silla/) and killed several at one blow. Those who remained alive thought that it was Llíban who had hurt them and decided to kill him. They went looking for him. Llíban killed them at the first climb.

Llíban advised the cacicas that they should make people respect the elders, see to it that the land did not fall into the hands of foreigners, and, if the Pijao returned, call him through the medicine men in order to exterminate them.

One day he said that he was leaving, and in spite of the entreaties he left Eshufi Ik and went on.

Informant: Felisa Ñunda, 70 years old, does not know Spanish.

Interpreter: Marco Antonio Penkue.

Version II

Once the water was dirty. A young boy went to see why the water was dirty. He met an old man called Llíban, who gave him a small object. "You can fight the Pijao," he told him. That small object was called isot (lariat), he took it and kept it in a jar. The Pijao came and he sent a servant, surely a relative, to bring it. When he returned, he said that there was no lariat, but only a snake; he did not bring it

[Parcialidad of Calderas]

* 539 /296 cont./

because he was afraid. The boy went in person to fetch it; he threw with it, making a sound like thunder; he killed the Pijao as far as Kuetando. This boy was called Liîban, but he was a son of human beings. "I will go to live in a lagoon, I shall never die," he said. He must still be alive. Thunder sent a young boy so that he might turn into Thunder himself.

Informant: Victoriano Piñakué, 18 years old, speaks Spanish quite well.

/297/ 5. Juan Chiracol

It was known that Juan Chiracol had come from two "chinitas" /darlings/ who had come from above, from the Zenzepechi ridge, fleeing from the Pijao.

For food they had potatoes and other produce of the earth. With much labor, and with stone tools, they managed to clear the montaña.

At one time the Pijao came and ate one of them. The other one remained alone. She became pregnant by a jaguar, and from this union Juan Chiracol was born. He was very intelligent. He knew the sufferings that his mother had gone through; for this reason he fought the Pijao until he had exterminated them. The mother became used to the company of the jaguar, for the latter looked after his son Juan and brought meat from the mountain. When the child was grown, the jaguar left. Mother and son moved to the place where the cemetery now stands and began to build the church.

Chiracol gave much advice. He advised them not to sell the land, which was theirs alone and for which they had fought the Pijao. He said that he was leaving and that he would not return, but that he would watch them from the El Caspe Lagoon. When he is angry, he says uuuuh.

The lagoon of El Caspe is said to be very far away, on the borders of Atá. It has the reputation of being very rough. It is believed that when a tree falls or a rock slides down, it is

[Parcialidad of Calderas]

539

/297 cont./

Juan Chiracol who is coming to scold them. Juan Chiracol is said not to have liked women, and for this reason he left no descendants.

Informant: Agustín Muse, 80 years old, does not know Spanish.

Interpreter: Marco Antonio Penkue.

6. Llíban and Juan Chiracol

Llíban was a sat (cacique) of Calderas in its western part, and this is why the first house located in the Puelchí hollow is called Llíban. Nowadays it is called Eshufi Ik. Juan Chiracol was also a sat, but in the eastern part. He hid in El Caspe, a very big lagoon located on the borders of Belalcázar, /298/ while Llíban went to the borders of Chinas. After vanquishing the Pijao, the two had a talk and disappeared, each to his own destination, at the places mentioned. Llíban advised good management; he told them that they were now free from the Pijao and that, in case the latter should return, he should be called through the medicine men. No one knows how he appeared. He had not been baptized, but seemed to be a Christian.

Informant: Agustín Muse.

Interpreter: Marco Antonio Penkue.

7. The Little Girl Who Became a Snake

On a certain occasion and during a flood, a little girl came out. The people took her in, and a married couple undertook to bring her up. When the priest came to celebrate a fiesta, the married couple and the people went to mass. The little girl also wanted to go, but because she had no dress they did not take her. The couple had gone far when the little girl went after them, impelled by her ardent desire to attend mass and covered only with an old shawl. When the couple reached

[Parcialidad of Caldenas]

534 /298 cont./

the church, she reached the stream Yutuk. There she turned into a snake. The church was full of people. The snake approached the temple; it was as long as the rainbow and had two ears like a donkey. With its body it surrounded the church, encircling it, and put its head through the door. It ate all the people, except the couple raising it, who begged it to wait a while. They went out sorrowfully. After having eaten the people, the snake rose to the sky to devour the Virgin. When it was high, very high, two animals came (oh = eagles) from Puelchí, went through the air to the plaza, and bit the snake in two, nearly destroying it. It fell to the ground, undoubtedly dead. A man came with his mula /female mule/ to destroy it, mounted the mula, and ran far away. The snake probably rotted away there, but snakes appeared everywhere. In Ulnengá there was one in a bog that smelled horrible when warmed by the sun. It would come up and eat people who had fields. They told this to an Englishman, who with his sword cut off its head and its tail, both blue in color. The head flew through the air /299/ and fell in Ulnengá, while the tail fell at the spot called Loto.

Informant: Victoriano Piñakué.

8. Creation of the Páez River

227 823 Chautén made the Páez river appear. He went very far along the path, certainly by way of the paramo. He was very thirsty and there was no water. On the mountain there was a marsh; he took a mountain reed, sank it into the marsh, sucked, abundant water came out, and he quenched his thirst. This water did not run in any direction. The man went on and the water followed him. Then he wondered why the water did not stay put. He ran and the water did too. He climbed on a branch, and the water remained stretched out at his feet, in a large pool, without overflowing anywhere. The man went on, and the water followed him. He would run for a long

3:Bernal Villa--22 E-5 (1952) 1953 SC15 Paez SC15

[Paraalidad of Calderas]

* 539 /299 cont./
823 time, and the water would stay put for a little while, so that he could rest while the current approached. Chautéh ran in a zigzag to avoid being overtaken by the water. This is why in La Plata the river runs with many bends. The man was getting very tired, so he left the watercourse at the big river (Magdalena).

Informant: Victoriano Piñakué.

*539

9. Chautéh

Chautéh was causing much damage, and he was taken far away, to where the sun rises. He is inside a large box, but he has only one eye. Chautéh made all the animals. Before that they were people. The chiguaco was a sacristan because he can pray; the chicao can whistle, and the chachalaca is very talkative. The rabbit was a very mendacious man; when the dog gives chase, he does not allow himself to be caught, but constantly changes direction. There was a carpenter who knew how to make chests large enough to hold a man. He told Chautéh that he would make him one as a gift. He accepted the offer. The carpenter made it with great care; he finished it and showed it to him. Chautéh got in to measure it, and the chest was closed, never to open again. The carpenter nailed him in so that he would cause no more damage. Chautéh begged: "Open it, please." /300/ but no one opened it. Then he asked that two holes be made so that he could see. The carpenter took out his chisel and made one hole properly; when he was making the other, the tool slipped and put out one of his eyes. He has made me one-eyed, he said to himself, but while I am here he will be looking at tree trunks and opening tree trunks, nothing more. The carpenter turned into a little bird that opens up a hole in a tree trunk, lays eggs, and raises its young.

Informant: Victoriano Piñakué.

[Parcialidad of Calderas]

/300 cont./

10. The Sea

*
539
823 On a certain occasion Tomás Dimales said to Pedro, his brother, that he had set up a test. Tomás would make a river, and Pedro would have to stop it. He accepted the proposal and set out running. In those days no one knew where the waters went. Pedro told his brother ahead of time that he would tell him when the river was stopped. So it came to pass. When Santo Tomás went to look, he found the sea there where Pedro was. The latter told him to note carefully whether the river was running. He had stopped the waters at this spot.

Informant: Vicente Puchi, 56 years old, speaks Spanish.
Interpreter: Marco Antonio Penkue.

11. Piedra Alta

Pedro and Tomás Dimales were two brothers, the former evil, the latter good. They lived together and went about as companions. In those days Calderas was flat. On a certain occasion they were passing the boundaries of the Muralla together; there were no rocks. Pedro said to Tomás: Look at the cliffs that have formed; Tomás replied that that was not possible, since the region was flat. When he pointed to the spot, a large rock arose: it is the Piedra Alta /tall stone/.

Informant: Vicente Puchi.

*539 12. Pedro and Tomás Dimales

Tomás, being good, received Pedro when he was out walking. The latter would state his desire to help him in his work, and for a few days he would do it well. Once Tomás sent him to sow maize. He sowed it, but he threw all the seeds into a single hole. Another time Pedro /301/ went to weed maize, but all he did was to cut down the maize. On another occasion, Pedro was angry at Santo Tomás; he went to him and told him

[Parcialidad of Calderas]

/301 cont./

539 that he looked like a stone. His intention was to turn him into a stone. Since Tomás was a saint, his plan failed.

Informant: Guillermo Guagás, 35 years old, does not know Spanish.

Interpreter: Marco Antonio Penkue.

13. Santo Tomás

Santo Tomás was the brother of María Santísima, but he was very tricky and very ugly. To give an idea of what people said to him: he had lice, scabies; he was loathsome. If someone mumbled something, he turned him into stone. His sister was displeased by all the things he did, and she often admonished him, because if he went on like this he would destroy the world. It was he who left so many cliffs, rocks, and ugly stone . With one footstep he rocked the world. As for the Christians, sons of María Santísima, he turned them into stone. He committed so many offenses that María Santísima became angry. She went to the sky so as not to see all these iniquities. Her brother followed her; he reached the sky and María ordered him to return to the world; he went down in a gust of wind. Then he sent him to the end of the world, where he is. His annoying behavior came to an end. Sometimes he becomes angry and makes the earth shake, because he wants to get out, which María will not permit. It is said that María Santísima put him in bronze boxes /cajones/ by means of a trick. He cannot come out, but he makes the world shake.

Informant: Agustín Muse.

Interpreter: Marco Antiono Penkue.

Version I

In Lame they caught Santo Tomás. It is said that in Lame there is a stone on which he put his goad /rejo/ and sat down.

#539 [Parcialidad of Calderas]

/301 cont./

The marks are said to be there. While he was resting, he saw a beautiful bird. He was looking at it, fascinated, when they caught him and put him in a box. They put him to sleep; they buried him and planted a tree called tachi (tachuelo /Pictetia aristata; P. aculeata/).

[823] /302/ Earthquakes are caused by Santo Tomás when, tired of one position, he changes it in order to rest.

Informant: Corpus Guagás, 18 years old, knows Spanish.

Interpreter: Marco Antonio Penkue.

14. The Petrified Fiesta-house

At the place called Uikuet it is said that there was a house where a fiesta was celebrated. It is petrified. When the fiesta was in progress, a rather tattered little boy came to ask them for food. An old woman grumbled that there were so many people, why should they give anything to that boy? The latter left, saying, "I see stone." The entire house was turned to stone. The little boy grew large. It is said that one can still see the fallen jars. That little boy was Santo Tomás.

Informant: Corpus Guagás.

Interpreter: Avelino Penkue.

15. The Stones of Chaikin

[823] The two stones of Chaikin were made by Chautéh. Two women were carrying sugar cane. He asked them to give him sugar cane and they did not give him any. Then he turned them into stone.

Informant: Victoriano Piñakué.

[Parcialidad of Calderas]

/302 cont./

*539

16. The Mother of Salt

The old people could see the mother of salt. They saw a little old woman with tufts of hair that were balls of salt. The old people said that she was the mother of salt.

Informant: Justo Muse.

Interpreter: Marco Antonio Penkue.

*539
372

17. Fire

A little old woman possessed fire. A little girl went to ask her for a few small firebrands. The old woman merely gave her a few smoldering twigs, /303/ which went out before she got home. She came back again to ask for another firebrand, but the old woman was not there. The fire burned inside in thick firebrands. The girl took a big one. The old woman found out and went in pursuit of her, being niggardly about the brand. The girl ran, but when the old woman overtook her, she threw the fire into straw "ready" /jecha/ and good. The people who needed fire took it from this spot, which for this reason was called Ipikué (Plan of fire).

In those days they were making the pueblo. They were thinking about a name. If fire comes out, they said, it shall be called Calderas /caldrous/; if not, Buktá. The former came out, and the pueblo was called Calderas.

Informant: Victoriano Piñakué.

Version I

The old people relate that there was an old woman who possessed fire and who distributed it to the other people. Once she refused to give them any more fire, and she extinguished it in order to leave them without it. She saved only one burning stick and she ran off with it. The Indians ran after her, and as they were overtaking her, she dropped the brand

[Parcialidad of Calderas]

* /303 cont./

539 at one side of the path and hid in a river. By the smoke they
392 found the fire, and all the people were able to supply themselves from it. This one was not extinguished again. It is believed that the old woman was a Pijao.

Informant: Vicenta Tumbo, 40 years old, does not know Spanish.

Interpreter: Marco Antonio Penkue.

Version II

When religion had recently been introduced, there was an old woman who drew fire from her armpit and gave it to anyone who asked for it. The missionaries came and said that this fire was witchcraft and thus had to be blessed. The old woman fled so that the fire would not be taken from her and the blessing would not be given. As she went running off, the old woman set herself on fire, and the flames covered her completely. When she reached the river, which was in flood, she threw herself into it. The old woman is said to have been a monster (Pijao); she had a very large face, hair like a mane and rather gray.

Informant: Juan Petins.

Interpreter: Marco Antonio Penkue.

/304/ Version III

The old people related that once there was a little girl who had nothing. María Santísima appeared to her and asked her what she was doing, to which she replied that she was there. "You will have to blow on the fire," she said, "because even I am cold." Ordering her to fetch some kindling, María Santísima drew fire from her armpit. She warned her to preserve it, for without it they could not live. From it fire was
[103] obtained for everyone. This is why they gave the place the name of Calderas

[Parcialidad of Calderas]

* /304 cont./
539 name of Calderas. María Santísima gave the fire and disappeared.

Informant: Agustín Muse.
Interpreter: Marco Antonio Penkue.

18. The Mine-armadillo

*539
823
825 My father was inside a house. Suddenly he saw an animal that shone like a lamp; the light went up to the sky. The animal was a mine-armadillo which was climbing up the hill. If one succeeds in catching him, one puts him in a large box and gives him maize to eat. He turns into a mine, pure gold. Before catching him, one must have the silver ready, 50 or 100 pesos; one wraps him in a new kerchief and lifts him; he is very light. Without the silver, he is seen in the stream or on the path, but one cannot catch him; one puts his hand there where the armadillo is, withdraws it, and he does not move.

Informant: Victoriano Piñakué.

19. The Thin Man

* 539
774
781 My father bought a jar and carried it on his back. At night, drunk, he met the thin man sitting by the path; it was a soul. He was about to fall into the ditch, but the soul did not let him fall and accompanied him home as if he were his brother. Father, frightened, started falling, but the soul held him up; he carried a light, making the night very clear. Nevertheless he did not speak. The man looked like the Sisters; he was quite white.

*539

20. The Devil

My father, with a friend, was coming from Belalcázar on horseback; I was behind my father. The friend came last; he

[Parcialidad of Calderas]

/305/

*539 carried a big load. As they went down the El Tablón slope, they saw a man coming out in front of them. It rained a little there, but it soon cleared up; a cloud that was there rose and went away. The man ran hard, he was on a black, colimocho horse, and he woré a black rubber raincoat. My father went down to the El Tablón stream and found nothing. In the stream there was a door; he was unable to open it; the horse jumped. He looked all around, but found nothing. He looked for tracks and did not find them either. Then he thought that it was the devil.

21. The Jaguar Man

In the old days there were jaguar people, who were the same as the mountain jaguar that eats sheep. The men went out once with guns and dogs to hunt it, but without any success. They asked a jaguar man to hunt it. He went to the mountain with a machete /peinilla/, found the real jaguar, and started to play with it, until he became angry and killed it. The jaguar man was much stronger, because he ate salt. He put it on the path and told the other men to bring it down. They went with guns; the jaguar seemed alive; they believed that it was and went back. The jaguar man assured them that it was dead, so they came back and picked it up. Far, far away, there are jaguar men. In Cali. The white men themselves are jaguars. Jaguar men are thieves.

Version Number 1

Thieves turn into jaguars and take cattle to Garzón and Neiva. They go back home and again turn into human beings.

A man was walking in the paramo, hunting alone. He saw a Pijao who made fire by piling up kindling and drawing fire from his armpit. The Pijao had a gold staff, and the hunter said to himself, I shall take this staff from him.

[Parcialidad of Calderac]

/305 cont./

* 539 He turned into a jaguar, while the Pijao took out bananas and a snake to eat. Once changed into a jaguar, he wanted to take the staff, and the Pijao ran for about three hours, closely followed by him, until he reached his pueblo. The jaguar changed into a man in order to see the pueblo, while the Pijao told his relatives, and the latter went out in pursuit of him. The man again turned into a jaguar, ran back to the starting point, and took home with him in a pouch /306/ the roasted bananas; he turned back into a man and told his wife what had happened.

22. The Man and the Thin Dog

My father was coming from the market and drinking chicha. He was drunk and fell asleep along the way. At midnight he woke up and went on. He saw a thin dog. He caught it. At once a very thin man came out with his heart hanging out. The man ran. My father also ran. Much farther on my father lashed out /fuetio/ at him. Without thinking, he fell flat and went to sleep. He woke up at dawn and only saw that he had grabbed at the flowers, for they were crushed. He had grabbed without thinking.

23. The Head

The head goes about alone. It comes from very far away. It goes about at night. It is merely a head with one tooth, one ear, and without a body. A man who was sitting on a stone with his staff saw it, caught it, and sent it to the river. The man set out running. The head came out of the stream to pursue him and went on beyond him, for the man had climbed a very high tree in order to hide. It came back and looked for the man with the odor. It saw him in the tree, but the head could not go that far. It bobbed and bobbed until the cock crew, at which time it went home. There it has relatives.

[Parcialidad of Calderas]

* 539 /306 cont./

If dawn comes and it has not reached home, it asks for shelter from its relatives. On the following night it reaches its own home. The man climbed down the tree in fear and went home, telling everyone (wives, sisters, children, parents, and relatives) that he had seen this head.

The head may appear to any man, whether he is drunk or not. The animal goes downhill easily, but has a hard time going uphill.

It travels underground and comes out in the field.

24. The Animals

A man went to see a relative who lived far away. He drank chicha with a cousin. He got drunk and walked through the night. /307/ He carried a machete /peinilla/ and also a shotgun to kill chachalaca. He made a shot. Something came out that looked like a pig. He could not see anything, although he looked all around him. He took out his machete to defend himself, but he could not see anything. He shot his gun once more into the air, and then many animals came out, to judge by the noise that they made in the leaves of the trees, but nothing was to be seen; only the noise was heard and nothing more. The night was very dark; he struck matches, but they immediately went out. Then he shouted. A female relative heard him and went looking for him, accompanied by her little daughter. She carried a burning twig with which she frightened away the animals. They found the man in a ditch, took him out, and went off in fear. The women ahead and the man behind. Along the way there was a small stream, and an animal seemed to move in the water. The man looked behind and saw only two eyes shining and shouted, "look, here comes an animal," and passed the women. They did not see anything. They held up the light, and the animals remained quiet.

[825] At nine o'clock the animals are already walking about. During Holy Week they walk about a great deal. People cannot go out.

/307 cont./

*539
772
781

25. The Sky

Informant: Agustín Muse.
Interpreter: Marco Antonio Penkue.

Once when I was near death my soul climbed to the sky, which is a flat plain where the view extends to the horizon. The entrance is wooded. The Virgin told me that this land was for her sons and that I would have a piece. To reach the sky, one first goes along a good path and soon becomes lost; the most hidden one leads to the Virgin's palace. It is said that it is bad for one to eat the porcupine, because he will come before María Santísima dressed in its skin. He will go to the devil, and although the latter cannot pick him up, he has hooks with which to grab him. This is why, at the hour of retiring or rising, I pray to my God and to María.

[262]
[825]

The palace of María is of blinding splendor. It is very beautiful. The Virgin always holds the Child; only rarely does she put him down somewhere.

I tell my fellow men what I saw but they make fun of my account.

/308/ It is holy, they should respect it.

Good people go to heaven, that is to say, those who do not abuse other persons, say evil things, or are loutish.

*539
824

26. Origin of the Plants

The old people said that every kind of seed had been given by María Santísima, who drew them from her womb and gave them to the Christians in order for them to maintain themselves. Plants are thus inherited from María Santísima. She gave away every kind of seed when her brother was around. Hence his rage, since he wanted to give seeds and animals and could not. Perhaps the snakes were made by Santo Tomás. /The bibliography on p. 309 is omitted in the translation; see the foreign text./

[825]
000

3: Bernal Villa SC15 Paez SC15

115
124

[For information on the informants and interpreters used by the author in collecting specific examples of mythological tales from the Parcialidad of Calderas, see category 116, pp. 10-32.]

[For the text of various Paez myths and tales, see category 116, pp. 13-32.]